



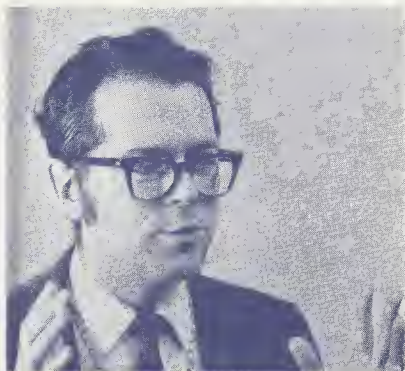
SPIRITUAL FRONTIERS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter

Vol. 5

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REV. J. GORDON MELTON

REV. J. GORDON MELTON JOINS NATIONAL STAFF

Rev. J. Gordon Melton, United Methodist minister, Research Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religions, and graduate student at Garrett Theological Seminary, has been named to the newly created position of lesson writer and national field representative. His first of three lessons on spiritual gifts in the church appears in this Newsletter. The next series will be on mysticism. He plans to travel to help form new study groups and aid area organizations. He is married and has a beautiful baby daughter.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Annual Conference meetings stir the soul. The excellent speakers and the far-seeing work of the Executive Council harmonize to create new goals and programs. Welcome is Rev. J. Gordon Melton who will write lessons and also help continue our leadership training program, meet with clergy, and form groups.

Members are encouraged to help us schedule group meetings along his summer route: May 22-24 H. Sherman Seminar, Arkansas; May 25-June 5 Memphis and Birmingham; June 6-10 Tulsa and West; June 10-13 Phoenix; June 14-16 Southern California; June 17-July 31 San Francisco area; August 1-15 Portland, Salt Lake City, Denver, Kansas City, St. Louis.

You can also help bring our message to clergy and church members by making an appointment with your own minister or local clergy to discuss our SFF materials. Then home study groups can form. Let's work toward achieving this goal wherever we can. Pray for it expecting changes soon.

Yours in Fellowship

ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH & ENLIGHTENMENT

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA D. Ericsson

In 1969 Rev. Melton organized and was the first chairman of the North Shore (Chicago) area organization. He has five study groups on topics ranging from healing and general psychics to the Betty Book literature. In process are three sets of new study group curriculum material, most of which will be available this fall. He addressed the national seminar for study group leaders, May 12, on this topic.

Beginning with a laying-on-of-hands service in 1970 at a retreat led by Mrs. Irene Hughes, Rev. Melton has developed an active healing ministry. This ministry centers on healing services at the area meetings and study groups.

During the year he has addressed SFF gatherings in Atlanta; Memphis; Joliet; Evansville and Birmingham.

An experienced writer, Rev. Melton has written Meditation: A Beginners Guide to Psychic Development and Spiritual Awareness (available through SFF headquarters, \$1.25) and an article in the January issue of Fate, "Does the Bible Support Reincarnation?" (Soon to be reprinted in the Spiritual Frontiers Journal.)

NEWS NOTES

● So. California - May 22, Mrs. Diane Pike "The Psychic Mirror," St. James Methodist Church, 2033 E. Washington, Pasadena, 3 p.m.; June 26, Rev. Howard Ray Carey "Finding Release From Psychic Problems," Hawthorne Methodist Church, 4754 W. 120th St., Inglewood.

● Santa Clara County - Kay Beck led a Spiritual Healing Workshop recently. Phone area chairman, Dorothy Allen for summer programs (408) 354-7488, Los Gatos, California.

● Minnesota - Welcome to Retreat registrants, Carleton College, July 5-9.

● Wisconsin - Spiritual Renewal Seminar, Mu-Ne-Dowk Retreat Center, Box 268, Kiel, June 11-20.

● Akron-Canton - May 27, Dr. Laurence Blackburn from England, "Spiritual Healing," Historical Society Auditorium.

● Metro N.Y. - Excellent variety of study groups. Write R. De Simone, 25 W. 68 St., New York, N.Y. 10023.

● Washington, D. C. - June 27, Mrs. Jeane Dixon, "My Psychic Gifts and My Religion;" July 25, Dr. Zipporah Dobyns, "Spiritual Aspects of Astrology," Foundry Methodist Church, 2 p.m.

● Pennsylvania - Welcome to Retreat registrants, Gettysburg College, July 18-23.

WELCOME NEW AREAS

Congratulations to members forming new area organizations:

Orlando, Fla., Mrs. Phylis V. Schlemmer, 2740 S. Rio Grande
Cincinnati, Ohio, Mr. Brougham Nichols, 83 Russell Drive, Hebron, Kentucky 41048
Alaska, Mrs. Harry Leflar, P.O. Box 4-227, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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VACATIONERS - SEEKERS

Two outstanding National Conferences will be held in July. The Prayer and Meditation conference at beautiful Carleton College near Minneapolis, July 5-9. Leaders are Dr. Marcus Bach Anatomy of Prayer, Rev. Alex Holmes Healing Power of Prayer and Meditation, Dr. Wm. Parker Prayer Can Change Your Life, Mrs. Betty Allen Mystical and Psychic Experiences, Mrs. Grace Brame, Meditation With Music. Registration, room and board only \$80. Includes private readings by amateur and experienced psychics. Variety of books. Programs are available.

The Spiritual Awareness conference at historic Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 18-23 leaders are Dr. Eric Butterworth Discover the Power Within You; Ambrose and Olga Worrall Unconventional Healing Methods, Allen Spraggett Amazing People, classes on healing, Bible, meditation, dreams, astrology - twenty-three speakers! Registration, room and board \$80.00. Private readings extra. Book Store. Youth 13-18 \$40.00. Registrar, Mrs. J. Bubeck, P.O. Box 6194 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110. Programs are available.

DOLLAR A MONTH

An enthusiastic member wrote us: "In appreciation for the enrichment of life which SFF has brought me, I wish to make it possible for more persons to have this experience." Please include me in the SFF Dollar A Month Club!" Members may use this coupon:

"I Am Rich in Spirit! Here is my dollar a month for SFF."

Signed _____.

Comments _____

An Introduction to the New Series of Lessons--
How to Use Them and Get the Most from Them

In recent lessons the highly important and significant call was sounded to make psychism intellectually, psychologically and spiritually respectable. Along side of these, a fourth imperative claims our attention: that of making the psychical respectable in light of the theological disciplines--i.e., theology, church history, Bible, ethics, and ecclesiology (the understanding of the church). Pulling together the themes of theology, contemporary psychical studies and biblical and historical concerns is no small task; few attempts have been made at an over-all picture. There is danger in such an effort. Theological differences are notorious for dividing people. If, however, these lessons are seen in their intended light, not as dogmatic teachings but as speculative probings, offered, not to regiment thought, but to help in asking questions and to raise important issues and thus to expand our range of vision and curiosity, then they can be highly valuable.

By its very nature, SFF can put forth no one way of approaching the psychical, Christianity, and spiritual reality. To do so would be neither possible nor desirable. It is not possible because all the para-psychological data is far from being complete and each new advance will modify theological ideas. It is not desirable because to put forth one way of approaching the psychical would destroy the openness and dialogue needed so vitally on a frontier discipline. New truth is being discovered daily and SFF must be constantly open to growth. The lessons are meant as aids to understanding, as prods to thinking, and as the basis of a dialogue on the issues under discussion.

With each lesson will be three items. A text will discuss the topic and try to define its implications. A closing paragraph (Carrying On the Dialogue) will offer suggestions to follow up the lesson and questions to be thought about and discussed. A final section will list further books and sources (where there are any) which can be obtained to go deeper into the topic.

Dialogue is the key word. Think, discuss the ideas presented, write the author to reveal missed insights and short-sightedness, but, most importantly, be involved in the process of exploring this relatively new area of concern: theologizing about the psychical.

Some working definition--

theology--thinking about the religious significance of any topic,
in this case psychic reality.
church--the sum total, past, present and future, of those who would
identify themselves with the western Judeo-Christian heritage.
psychical--a collective term for the whole area of the paranormal
experiences which include ESP, prophecy, dreams, mysticism,
communication with the dead, etc.

A Religious Approach to the Psychical

Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship has a very special relationship to the psychic community. With one leg in the religious establishment and the other in the world of psychic reality, it stands in the ideal position as a liason between these two significant areas of life. The unprecedented explosion of interest in psychic experience and the rapid growth in information about the nature of psychic reality impels those in such a liason position to re-evaluate at regular intervals their stance and to offer their *raison d'etre* to both communities. Previous generations of religious leaders, at least for the last one hundred and fifty years, have dismissed the psychic world as so much spiritualism, magic, and chicanery. Little room for dialogue was given. The rise of parapsychology as a genuine academic field, however, has forced a reopening of the dialogue and the taking of a new look at the vast area of overlap between the western religious heritage and the world of the psychical.

A renewed dialogue must proceed on the basis of mutual openness. The psychical certainly ranks with "what's happening in the world" and thus stands as one of the important issues toward which the religious community should direct its interest. Those of the psychic community who pursue their interest with depth are soon led into the spiritual outlook that psychic reality implies. The heritage of the religious establishment (the world of the Hebrew seers, Apostolic psychics, and Christian mystics) is certainly one of today's very live options for a particular expression of spirituality. The search for the logic of standing in both the psychical community and the religious establishment would seem a fitting place to begin the renewed dialogue.

The Bible Is a Psychic Book and Psychism Is a Biblical Concern

A prime area of mutual concern between the bearers of the Western religious heritage and the psychic community is the Bible. The Bible is the Western world's textbook of faith while at the same time it is a psychic source book from beginning to end. The Bible knows the dangerous and shady side of psychic experience and rightly condemns fortune telling and witchcraft. It also knows the spiritual side of the psychical and welcomes, as a sign of God's presence prophecy (pre-cognition), discerning spirits, spiritual healing, and ESP.

A vivid example of the psychic stream of biblical thought is seen in the career of Samuel, the Hebrew prophet. Samuel arrived on the scene as the last of a series of psychics who had regularly arisen to lead Israel since the days of Joshua. His arrival was in a time of psychic dryness. So dry was the psychic stream that Eli did not immediately recognize the beginnings of Samuel's psychic career when he was visited by the angel of God. The first book of Samuel records his career as the "seer" of Israel. The

definitive incident in Samuel's career occurred when Saul, then an unknown, sets out to find a lost herd of donkeys. At the point of giving up in his attempt to find them, Saul was approached by his servant:

Behold there is a man of God in this city; all that he says comes true. Let us go to him; perhaps he can tell us about the objects of our quest.

Saul replied in this practical way, "What shall we pay him; we don't even have bread."

Saul's servant then said, "Here, I have with me a fourth of a shekel, and we can give it to the man of God."

The writer of I Samuel then adds the most significant explanation of Saul's actions, "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, 'Come let us go to the seer,' for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer."

The outcome of the story was threefold. First Samuel had a clairvoyant vision of Saul journeying to see him. Secondly, Samuel gave Saul upon his arrival a precognitive vision of Saul's kingship. Thirdly, Samuel located the donkeys.

Samuel's career marked a real turning point in Israel's history. Saul is anointed king by Samuel shortly before the latter's death. This act marked the passing of control of Israel's future into the hands of a royal house and out of the hands of charismatic leaders.

In the New Testament psychics and psychic events abound. The early church took seriously its commission to preach and heal (Luke 9:2) and its role as the bearer of the Spirit (Acts 2). Psychic happenings were to the early church its manifest assurance of the Spirit's continued presence. Peter emerged as a healer par excellence. To Peter was brought "the sick, and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed." (Acts 5:16).

Paul frequently entered a trance state (Acts 22:17) and received visionary messages (Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2). The healings manifested as part of his ministry fill many verses in Acts. He developed a peculiar habit of sending out a handkerchief which had been on his body to be used as an instrument for healing the sick. On one occasion Paul's prophetic ability saved his life (Acts 27:43). It is Paul also who develops the apostolic church's theology of psychic experience (I Cor. 12:4-11).

Prophecy was alive in the Apostolic era. At least ten men and women are cited in the Book of Acts alone as prophets. Agabus on one occasion precognized before the congregation at Antioch that "by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the

world; and this took place in the days of Claudius." (Acts 11:23). Agabus appeared again as the one who predicts Paul's imprisonment by the Romans. This latter occurrence was made in the home of Philip the Evangelist. Philip, a deacon in the Caesarean Church, was blessed (or cursed as the case may be) with four unmarried daughters, each of whom was a prophetess.

The illegitimate and even evil use of psychic gifts were readily attacked by the early church. Acts 8 recounts the conversion of Simon the sorcerer and his attempt to buy the spirit after he perceived its power. In Acts 16 the slave girl with the "spirit of divination" who was "sooth saying" was released from her spirit by Paul's word. Her owners had Paul thrown in prison.

The New Testament itself closes with the magnificent vision of John, which we know as the book of Revelation.

The Psychical in the Apostolic Church

The fact that the psychical is a biblical concern is important but not so much as the role which the psychical played in the biblical church. If it were present but of minor significance, could there be any reason for us to proceed further? But such is not the case. Quite to the opposite, the psychical was of central importance to the early church; yea, it is pictured as part of the essence of its life style.

"Gifts of the spirit" was the phrase used to designate psychic talents by Paul. The church was the bearer of the spirit and had manifest within itself the gifts appropriate. These gifts included the functional ones like pastoring and administering the church's business. These gifts also included those which were ubiquitous in the church's membership. Faith was such a gift. Primarily, however, these gifts were the "psychic" ones as enumerated by Paul in I Corinthians 12:4-11. Included were (spiritual healing, working miracles (psychokinesis), prophecy (pre-cognition), discerning spirits (mediumship), and glossolalia (speaking in tongues).

Why would psychism form such a significant part of the Christian's life. First, the church focused its life in the life of Jesus. Jesus was its example and leader. He was the one to be copied. Jesus was also a psychic, or, as he was defined theologically, the bearer of the spirit. This same Jesus had commissioned the church to preach and heal and set it an example by his miracles and healings. It was out of his resurrection and post-resurrection appearances that the church found its reason for existing. And it was this same Jesus who left his followers with the promise that, "He that has faith in me shall do the works that I do and shall do greater works than these." Thus it was only natural that a church that lives for its Lord and out of its Lord's power should find itself deeply involved

in psychic reality.

Beyond just copying her Lord, the church put the psychic gifts to a functioning purpose in her life. As Paul notes, they were given for the unity of the church. "For his gifts...were for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Eph. 4:13).

Theological differences are not unimportant; yet they fade in significance when confronted by a body formerly eaten by cancer but now made whole by prayer. The average sermon does not make near the impact that an accurate psychic reading does. There is no joy like that known by someone who speaks in tongues for the first time.

Danger--For the Church That Forgets Its Psychic Heritage

Given the presence of the psychical in the Bible and in the life of the apostolic church, does it necessarily follow that it should be a part of the life of the contemporary church? In the sense that the Bible and the apostolic church are somewhat normative to church life, psychic reality deserves a hearing. More importantly, however, is the danger inherent in pushing psychic reality out of the church. The effects of this banishment of the psychical in the post-Enlightenment church is all too evident.

The church loses its ability to make sense of the super-natural which has always been its area of expertise. The world beyond nature as presently incorporated in physical laws is still impinging upon people. A church without the psychical can only dismiss this impingement as so much nonsense, primitivism or hallucination.

The church without the psychical loses its sense of expectancy and urgency. It is when prayer can be manifest as an effecting agent of God's Spirit that one can approach it with an expectancy that it will be answered and that it is more than a pious and sophisticated dialogue with his imagination. When worship is encounter with Spirit and manifestly so, the urgency of attendance comes naturally. One encounter demands of itself another.

Finally, the church that forsakes psychic reality loses its motive and guidance for the ethical life. It is out of the encounter with the Spirit Beyond and with men on a spiritual level that our kinship with all men is revealed. It is in the psychic experience where man confronts, as Dr. Rhine phrases it, "that which is unique in man." Notwithstanding man's role as animal and the ability of plants and animals to "communicate" psychically, psychic man is a creature qualitatively apart; and in the oneness of psychic experience, the brotherhood of man to man is most ably demonstrated.

Carrying On the Dialogue

Three appropriate steps are open to those who wish to continue this dialogue. First, the psychic stream in the Bible and in the Judeo-Christian heritage needs to be more closely defined and placed in its proper perspective. The sources listed below will be useful in this endeavor. Secondly, the exploration of the area of overlap between the psychical and traditional religion should be broadened. A few statements have been made; more can and should. Thirdly, implementation on the local level of the new world of emerging psychical and spiritual reality is the meaningful goal of all other actions. The formation of prayer and healing groups, the return of the air of expectancy to worship and the new depth to the religious life (to name only a few) will be the practical results of significant study and enlightened understanding. In the long run the aim is neither a gross spiritism nor even a refined spiritualism-neither the cultivation of a high but spooky principle, or the invocation of the dead or the delineation of the future. The goal is spirituality, the spiritual life or to be exact life in the Holy Spirit.

Suggested for further reading:

A few of the books which would follow up the above discussion are:

Carrington, Hereward, Loaves and Fishes. New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1935. 274 pp.

*Higgins, Paul L., Encountering the Unseen. Minneapolis: T. S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1966. 152 pp.

Sanford, Agnes, The Healing Light. St. Paul: Macalester Park Publishing Co., 1947. 171 pp.

*May be purchased through SFF. Others may be obtained on loan from the SFF library. (Please anticipate a waiting list.)